

**NEWS RELEASE BY THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**  
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## **New Hampshire's First Dam Removal Begins**

### ***Governor Shaheen Joins in Ashuelot River Restoration***

HINSDALE – Gov. Jeanne Shaheen today helped restore a free-flowing section of the Ashuelot River today as she participated in breaching the McGoldrick Dam in Hinsdale, New Hampshire, the first dam to be removed in New Hampshire. Several federal, state and local representatives, and conservation organizations joined the Gov. Shaheen for the historic event.

“Throughout New Hampshire’s history, rivers – and their dams – have played an important role in New Hampshire’s economy prosperity and quality of life. Dams, like the McGoldrick Dam, fueled our state’s leap into the industrial age,” Gov. Shaheen said. “But today, many of these dams are obsolete, uneconomical, and in some cases public safety hazards. The time has come to give something back to the rivers that have given so much to our economy and our history. Removing this dam will restore our fisheries, improve water quality and create new recreational opportunities, which will allow this river to continue to contribute to our quality of life and economy.

“The McGoldrick Dam will be the first dam removed in the state of New Hampshire, allowing the Ashuelot River to run free for the first time in 173 years. This move will help make it possible for thousands of American shad, blueback herrings and Atlantic salmon to return once again in full force – after too long an absence – to the Ashuelot River,” Gov. Shaheen said.

The removal of the McGoldrick Dam is made possible through a collaborative public-private initiative, called the New Hampshire River Restoration Task Force. The goal of the task force is to remove old, obsolete and uneconomical dams, and thus eliminate public safety hazards, restore fisheries, improve water quality, and create new recreational opportunities. Restoring the Ashuelot River by removing the dam will help bring back thousands of American shad, blueback herring and Atlantic salmon. The river is a major tributary of the Connecticut River and was a historically significant river for these native fish.

“The Ashuelot River is regarded as one of our state's premier waterways,” said Department of Environmental Services Commissioner Robert Varney. “The removal of the McGoldrick Dam will lead to the restoration of more than two miles of the river to its natural state, creating both ecological and recreational benefits.”

The Ashuelot River is one of a select number of rivers specially designated by the New Hampshire legislature under the State Rivers Management and Protection Program. New Hampshire

has made removing obsolete dams a priority and is only the second state to create a state position specifically to coordinate river restoration through dam removal.

Varney said that two more dams are under consideration for removal, which could result in the restoration of an additional 28 miles of free-flowing Ashuelot River. He said, "DES is actively ensuring that all dam removals across our state be well coordinated with local officials, in cooperation with state and federal agencies, including historical preservation interests."

The 6-foot high, 150 foot-long McGoldrick Dam and associated canal were built in 1828, and provided various local businesses with power for more than a century. The presence of the dam and canal transformed Hinsdale from a quiet agricultural town into a small, but characteristic New Hampshire manufacturing village, one of the busiest in the Ashuelot River watershed. The privately owned dam is now obsolete and in poor condition. It is being removed with the consent of its owner.

"Dams and pollution decimated migratory fish runs in the Ashuelot River," said Scott Decker, fish habitat biologist for New Hampshire Fish and Game. "Now that the water quality has greatly improved, it's time to address the physical barriers in the river. The removal of the McGoldrick Dam is a significant step in restoring access to historical spawning habitat for migratory species."

New Hampshire's federal delegation, Senators Judd Gregg and Bob Smith, and Rep. Charlie Bass, supported this effort. Sen. Gregg said, "The Ashuelot River is one of the key watersheds in our state and has long played a critical role in strengthening New Hampshire's unique ecosystem. The McGoldrick Dam certainly helped to shape the historical and economic landscape in southwestern New Hampshire, and now removing it will be a major step in the continued restoration of this great river. I would like to thank all the organizations which made this day possible."

The project is made possible through financial and technical assistance from: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NH Fish & Game Dept., NH Dept. of Environmental Services, NH Division of Historical Resources, NH Dept. of Transportation, and the American Sportfishing Association's FishAmerica Foundation. The project has received valuable support from Bob McGoldrick, Conservation Law Foundation, Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee, Algonquin Power Systems, Inc., and the Town of Hinsdale.

"I've been working for the federal government for over 32 years," said Michael Bartlett, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service New England Field Office Supervisor. "Removal of this dam has been far and away the best example of federal, state, and non-profit organization cooperation I have ever seen. It has truly been a pleasure to be involved with New Hampshire's River Restoration Task Force."

Anglers hope improvements in the river will restore fisheries on the Ashuelot and bring back recreational fishing, which could result in increased revenue to communities along the river. The NH Fish and Game Department has spearheaded efforts to restore anadromous fish to the Ashuelot, and has been stocking about 200,000 Atlantic salmon fry each spring since 1995, 700 American shad each spring since 1998 and 80 river herring each spring since 1998.

"While a number of dams serve useful functions, there are also a number that are obsolete," said James MacCartney, river restoration specialist for Trout Unlimited and member of the NH River Restoration Task Force. "We have some opportunities to remove those dams, not only to

enhance anadromous fish habitats, but to restore the river's ecosystem. We'll be looking at these opportunities one dam at a time."

The River Restoration Task Force includes: NH Fish & Game Dept., NH Dept. of Environmental Services, NH Division of Historical Resources, and NH Office of Emergency Management. Federal governmental partners include: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Marine Fisheries Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the Army Corps of Engineers. Non-profit organizational partners include: Conservation Law Foundation, Coastal Conservation Association, Coldwater Fisheries Coalition, Connecticut River Watershed Council, Trout Unlimited, NH Rivers Council, American Rivers and American Whitewater Association.

"This initiative is just another example of how New Hampshire is leading the nation in taking steps to protect and restore our environment," Gov. Shaheen said.

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